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Comments: Save the Dunes, on behalf of itself and its members, strongly supports the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement to amend 128 forest plans to manage older federal forests in the face of a changing climate. These protected federal forests provide clean water, habitat for various wildlife species, and opportunities for recreation. This NOI is an important step toward the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to adopt policies and best practices to protect these forests. The growth in frequency, size, and severity of wildfire in older forests threatens their ability to continue to deliver valuable resources.

Proper management of these forests can reduce the effects of wildfire while maintaining and enhancing older forest ecosystems. Increasing the ability of federal forests to respond to disturbance such as wildfire is vital to protect clean water, wildlife habitat, and absorb carbon. The adoption of an old forest network, as the NOI proposes, that identifies younger forests to become part of the old forest age class would significantly contribute to adaptation and resilience. These forests supply clean water, habitat, and absorb carbon as well. Save the Dunes protects and advocates for the Indiana dunes, Lake Michigan, and the surrounding natural areas for the health and vitality of the environment, and the people who live, work, and recreate in Northwest Indiana. Our region is the richest area in Indiana and in the Great Lakes basin in terms of biodiversity. With the addition of this NOI, our state's federal forests will be better protected for many years to come. We believe that this act will help address ecosystem concerns that affect our organization and our membership. Thank you so much for your consideration.